Commentary on Basse dissertation summary

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1. Introduction

Looking back over the last three decades which plot the development and evolution of content and language integrated learning (CLIL) – initially in European then global contexts – three periods emerge in terms of research, theoretical underpinning, and classroom practices. Initially, the focus was on the relative merits and pendulum swings of a focus on content and/or a focus on language resulting in a shared understanding that CLIL teachers need to develop a repertoire not only of strategies and techniques drawing on both content and language areas of expertise but more fundamentally to create new ways of conceptualising learning in their classrooms. The next phase turned attention to integration with a sharper focus on learning agendas and explorations of what successful integrated learning might look like in a range of bilingual contexts. Nikula, Dafouz, Moore, and Smit (2016), in their edited volume dedicated to integration in CLIL and multilingual education, identify three fundamental perspectives: curriculum and pedagogy planning, participant perspectives, and classroom practices. It is in classroom practices that the discussion of Basse's work is centred, which addresses the call for more empirical research into the intricacies of dialogue for learning and related tasks and events in CLIL classrooms.

The current phase situates CLIL as a pedagogic driver poised to significantly contribute to supporting deeper learning across the curriculum. Deep learning is the successful internalization of conceptual content knowledge (meaning making) and the automization of subject specific procedures, skills, and strategies which depend on the learners' acquisition of disciplinary literacies. It signifies a shift from CLIL being a language-

related phenomenon to one which connects to pedagogic movements where language and literacies are seen as core to all learning in any language. Influential research (e.g., Coyle, Halbach, Meyer & Schuck, 2017; Dalton-Puffer, 2013; Llinares, Morton, & Whittaker, 2012) brings together the theoretical and practical roles of language and subject literacies demonstrating how CLIL provides a forum for understanding the complexities of deeper learning through a more integrated and holistic lens. With an emphasis on the design of learning environments and achieving the goal that successful learning involves self-regulated learning, CLIL has been repositioned within the broader educational agenda to make a significant contribution to understanding how learning can be enriched when using more than one language and where subject literacies, academic discourse, and 'languaging' learning are identified as fundamental elements. CLIL, therefore, has the potential to become a motivating transformative change agent which provides a dynamic context for teachers and learners to do things 'differently'. Exploring and understanding alternative assessment practices in CLIL can be identified as one such change which is long overdue. Assessment in CLIL has for some time been the 'elephant in the room'. The dilemma about what is being assessed – the 'is it language or is it content or both'? question has been raised endlessly with empirical research on assessment 'very scarce' in CLIL classrooms. It is therefore timely that Basses's rigorous study explores the relationship between different assessment practices and motivation in CLIL primary schools in Spain.

2. Discussion

The study sets out to compare 'traditional' CLIL assessment processes with those where an alternative approach is experimented to impact on teacher motivational practices in classes of 11–12 year olds, selecting four of the five schools in the study. 'Assessment for Learning' (AfL) is defined as a learner-centred approach using formative processes for "seeking and

interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there" (Broadfoot, Daughtery, Gardner, Harlen, James & Stobart, 2002) . Whilst this movement has developed significantly in mainstream monolingual settings in certain countries, Basse sets out to explore its motivational as well as meaning-making potential in CLIL contexts based on a comprehensive review of the literature. Her study responds to the under-researched role of assessment in CLIL classrooms – building on the Assessment and Evaluation in CLIL (AECLIL) project (Barbero, 2012). The author adopts the position that AfL, as an alternative approach, requires a reconceptualization not only of the purposes of assessment but also the process, practices, and roles of learners and teachers which enable it to happen successfully in classrooms. Basse focuses particularly on the role of the teacher as the mediator of learning, whose repertoire of techniques and strategies extends to include those which actively involve learners in using feedback, self-correction, peer assessment, transparent goal-setting, and effective questioning. She usefully refers to Bingham, Holbrook, and Meyers' (2010) definition of 'assessment as inquiry' which, by making learning visible and eventually self-regulated, requires learners to interpret their own 'evidence'.

The author clarifies the distinction between different types of feedback and their relative value in contributing to self-regulated learning. It can be argued that whilst this is 'known' in theory, there is little evidence to suggest alternative forms of assessment in CLIL have been experimented and adopted as regular practice. The AfL literature identifies types of feedback which impact on learning. For example, feedback about the task itself (FT), about the processing of the task (FP), about self-regulation (FR), and about the learner as self (FS) – in terms of purpose and effectiveness, remains not only outside CLIL discussions but crucially outside teacher education and professional learning in CLIL. Feedback which focuses on self-regulation and task processing are known to encourage meaning-making and

deeper learning, whilst feedback on the tasks itself focuses on self-improvement. Interestingly, feedback to students about 'self as learner' has a minimal effect. As Basse emphasizes, teacher understanding of the nature of feedback and its potential impact on learning has significant implications for task design, task sequencing, and dialogue (teacher-learner, learner-learner) (Broadfoot, 2007).

Basse turns to evidence from studies in non-CLIL contexts which demonstrate the positive impact of appropriate feedback and feedforward on student motivation. The link to motivation strengthens the position adopted by the author, which makes classroom practices – especially in terms of the quality and nature of tasks, strategies, and dialogue – fundamental learning tools, and explicitly promotes the need to use empirical evidence to reinforce 'assessment as inquiry' at different levels, from both teacher and learner perspectives.

Basse chooses to focus on the comparative effects on CLIL learners of approaches to assessment on motivation by AFL-trained teachers and non AFL-trained teachers. Her first question explores whether the frequency, distribution, and duration of motivational strategies differs according to the AfL understanding by the teachers. Her second question investigates potential relationships between AfL and motivational strategies. The quantitative analysis of corpus video data using an innovative and rigorous way of interpreting transcripts from recorded didactic units is most welcome. It provides an excellent example to encourage future collaboration between teachers and researchers of working with classroom data using the Corpus Tool (O'Donnell, 2008). Of the 82 transcripts which form the corpus, 14 lessons from four of the schools have been selected for this article. Lessons in citizenship (AfL and non-AfL), science (AfL and non-AfL), drama (AfL), and Art (non-AfL) are analysed in terms of time given to motivational strategies. This was followed by a calculation of the frequency and distribution of observable strategies, using an adapted form of Guilloteaux & Dornyei's (1998) MOLT (Motivation Orientation of Language Teaching). The number of strategies is

reduced from 25 to 15 with ‘echoing’ added as the 16th. The clustering of strategies identifies four elements as key: teacher discourse, participation structures, design of activities, and learner self-evaluation. The rigour involved in analysing these data is laudable.

Whilst it may be predictable that the findings would indicate greater use and variety of motivational strategies in AfL classrooms compared with non-AfL classrooms in terms of occurrences and time spent, it is the detail which identifies the strategies most used and their apparent impact that provides valuable evidence to be disseminated widely. Together with the use of qualitative student self-report data, the findings suggest that three motivational strategies had the greatest impact on learning: signposting (clarifying lesson objectives for monitoring and reflection), follow-up questions as well as referential questions, and elicitation of peer- and self-correction. Basse strongly emphasises: the need for motivational ‘discourse’ between students and teachers to underpin discussions about their learning; the importance of resources and techniques which combine both formative and summative assessment; and evaluative questions (how can I make this better?) in terms of achieving and satisfying learning goals and outcomes according to agreed criteria for success. This echoes the notion of ‘assessment as inquiry’ where students identify their own learning gaps and areas for improvement and are enabled to develop their own repertoire of strategies.

3. Conclusion

The study brings into question some unresolved issues for future research. If AfL is considered by the learners and teachers as a ‘new’ approach or at least one which is different from more traditional practices, it could be argued that this might impact positively but temporarily on their motivation for learning. Moreover, the AfL-trained teachers in this study were all native speakers of English and the non- AfL teachers had Spanish as their first language. Cultural differences indicative of national pedagogic priorities and trends, as well as the impact of AfL training for CLIL teachers, may carry significant weight. Given the

importance of dialogue highlighted by Basse in enabling self-regulated processes to be motivating for learners, the level and type of discourse in the CLIL language required to engage in meaningful and appropriate exchange needs to be made transparent, used, and practiced by learners supported by the teacher and constantly developed further in increasingly sophisticated ways. If AfL strategies and processes are to be used more widely, ways of addressing the dialogic demands for learners are crucial. It may be a 'given' in the participating Spanish primary classrooms, but there are many other CLIL contexts where the awareness and development of language skills required for such discourse will need to be carefully planned for and progressed over time. I would also add a word of caution with regards to setting and monitoring learning objectives: making learning objectives visible is meaningless unless they are 'owned' by learners and this ownership comes about through the involvement of learners in creating them. The constant use of teacher-generated objectives will not sustain learner motivation (Coyle, in press).

I conclude that this study provides the research community within and beyond CLIL-specific contexts with an agenda for assessment in bilingual settings. The idea of experimenting peer- and self-assessment through dialogic exchange, using empirical classroom data, is both challenging and exciting. Moreover, the dual focus of assessment which emphasises cognitive challenge *and* active participation combines with other areas of CLIL research to encourage more connected holistic research. Overall, the study demands a rethink in terms of CLIL resources and assessment tasks. It embeds formative assessment into the 'here and now' of learning rather than an add-on towards the end of a didactic unit. I thoroughly recommend this work as an example of a potential fundamental change agent contributing to evolving CLIL classroom practices. Basse brings CLIL into the mainstream educational research agenda by embracing the assessment dilemma in a relevant, rigorous,

and innovative way. I believe this study to be an inspirational example and trigger for further research.

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